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hawkers receive copies of the new-testament, from agents of the society, which I think was not the original design. Yours, &c. M.

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

ACCOUNT OF JOHN DE COURCEY,  
BARON OF KINSALE.

THE following romantic account of this ancient baron, in which is assigned the cause of the singular privilege still retained in that family, of appearing covered in the royal presence, may not be unacceptable.

John De Courcey, the descendant of a noble family who had come into England with William the first, signalised himself in Ireland, when very young, during the reign of Henry II. where it is said he fought five great battles, and conquered the whole province of Ulster, and part of Connaught.

In the year 1183 he was created earl of Ulster, and lord Connaught, and Henry the second granted him by patent, to continue to his heirs, the property of all the lands in Ireland that he could conquer with his sword, together with the donation of bishopricks and abbies, reserving only homage and fealty:

For some time after this he was governor of Ireland, either in conjunction with William Fitz Aldelmie, or by himself. But in the year 1200, Hugh Lacy the younger, earl of Meath, was joined with him in the government.

Some time after, his colleague, by his artifices, contrived to injure him in the king's opinion; and at length to supplant him altogether. The crime of which he was accused was, speaking disrespectful words, highly reflecting on the king, concerning the murder of his nephew, Arthur, duke of Brittany. This accusation irritated King John so much, that he made Lacy sole governor, and ordered him to seize the earl of Ulster and send him prisoner to England.

Lacy gladly obeyed the command; and attempted several times to take him by force, but finding that would not do, he at length hired some of the Earl's servants to betray him. Their treachery took effect on Good Friday: for, on that day, as the earl, according to the devotion of those times, was

walking unarmed, and barefooted, round the church-yard of Downpatrick, for penance, Lacy and his party fell on him unawares. He having nothing to defend himself, seized a wooden cross that stood in the churchyard. It is reported, says the chronicler who relates these anecdotes, that he slew thirteen of Lacy's men, but being at length overpowered, he was forced to submit.

The traitors met with the due reward of such a service; they asked their employer for a passport for England, with a certificate of the good service they had performed: he acquiesced in their desire, and gave them a letter, with directions that they should neither open it till it was demanded from them, nor ever return to Ireland. The contents were as follow:

"I, Hugh De Lacy, Lord Justice of Ireland, servant to my dread sovereign Lord King John, to all that shall read these letters, greeting: Know ye, that these men, whose names are under written, served some time Sir John De Courcey, late earl of Ulster, but now in durance in the tower of London, and for a sum of money betrayed their master into my hands: I deem them no better than Judas the traitor. How hardly soever I have conceived of Courcey, I hold them a thousand times more damnable traitors; wherefore, let no subject within the king's dominion give them any entertainment, but spit in their faces, and suffer them to rogue about, and wander like Jews."

He provided them with a vessel and provisions, but gave them no pilot or sailors; so that through want of skill they could not keep their course, but after having been tossed about for some time at the will of the wind and tide, they at length got into the harbour of Cork. Here they were no sooner landed than they were apprehended, and after undergoing a trial, convicted of having returned contrary to the Lord Justice's orders, and by his direction all hanged together.

De Courcey, after having been thus made prisoner, was sent to England, and lodged in the tower of London, where he was kept in confinement for more than a year: he owed his liberty

to the following circumstance : A dispute having arisen between king John and Philip Augustus, king of France, concerning the title to the duchy of Normandy : it was proposed by the French king, to prevent the unnecessary spilling of blood, that the dispute should be decided by single combat. King Philip being present, and a French champion ready, king John, though unwilling to risque the title upon one man's fortune, determined to accept the challenge ; yet he was for some time at a loss whom to name, until one of his friends reminded him of De Courcey, who was still a prisoner in the king's hands. When he was asked by the king if he would be content to fight in his quarrel ; " Not for thee," said the earl, " whose person I esteem unworthy the adventure of my blood, by reason of the ungrateful returns thou hast made me for my faithful services and loyalty to the crown, in imprisoning me unheard, at the suit of my rival and enemy Hugh De Lacy ; but for the crown and dignity of the realm, in which many a good man liveth against thy will, I shall be content to hazard my life." These words were not taken ill at the time, being considered as proceeding from an affected mind of him that was esteemed more plain than wise ; whereupon it was agreed that he should be dieted, apparelled, and armed to his content, and that his own sword should be brought him out of Ireland ; therefore being much made of, and cherished with large allowances after his hard keeping, the French challenger at first sight took him for a monster.

The day came, the place appointed, the lists provided, the scaffolds set up, the princes with their nobles on each side ; and many thousand spectators being present, forth comes the French champion ; he gives a turn or two, and rests him in his tent.

They then sent for De Courcey, who all this time was trussing himself in his tent with strong leather points ; he answered the messengers, " If any of the company were to go to such a banquet, I think he would not make any great haste."

Forth he comes, at length, gives a turn, and goes into his tent ; when

the trumpets sounded to battle, forth come the combatants, and survey each other : Courcey beheld the challenger with a wonderful stern countenance, and passed him by, while the Frenchman did not at all like his grim look, and the strong proportions and muscles of his body, as he stalked along. When the trumpets sounded the last charge, Courcey drew out his sword, at sight of which the Frenchman ran away, and conveyed himself to Spain ; whereupon they sounded victory to the earl of Ulster. The spectators huzza'd, clapped their hands, and threw up their caps.

Philip, the French king, being desirous to see De Courcey, requested king John that he might be called, to shew before them some part of his great strength, by striking a blow upon a helmet. It was agreed : a stake was set in the ground, covered with a shirt of mail, and an approved helmet set thereon. De Courcey drew his sword, and looking wonderfully stern upon the kings, with one blow he gave such a stroke to the helmet, that he cleft it asunder, together with the shirt of mail. The sword stuck so fast in the log, that no man there was able to pull it out again but the earl himself ; which sword, it is said, is preserved in the tower of London to this day.

The kings asked him what he meant by looking on them with such a grim and froward countenance, before he gave the blow to the helmet ? He answered, that if he had missed his blow upon the block, he would have killed the whole company, as well the kings as others.

After this noble performance, the king restored him to his former titles, and also gave him his estate, which was then valued at twenty-five thousand marks per annum, and likewise bid him ask for any thing else in his gift he had a mind to, and it should be granted. The earl replied, he had titles and estate enough, but desired that he and his successors, the heirs male of his family, after him, might have the privilege to stand covered in the royal presence of him and his successors, the kings of England, after the first obeisance. The king granted this ; and the said privilege is preserved in the family to this day.

De Courcey was of colour white, mighty large bones and sinews, tall, and broad in proportion of body, so that his strength was thought to exceed all others; in boldness incomparable, and a warrior even from his youth.

The earl, after this, attempted fifteen times to cross the seas to Ireland, but was always put back by contrary winds; whereupon he altered his resolution, and went to France, where he died, about the year 1210.

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

THE LISTENER, NO. I.

*Semper ego auditor—*

WALLS, they say, have ears—so they should—how many notable discoveries would otherwise be lost to the world—how much good would be unknown, how much wickedness undetected, were it not for these silent informers? How little would the ruffian and debauchee be restrained from their secret practices, how little compunction would they feel on committing them, were not the voice within seconded by the ear without. The science, or to speak more philosophically, the mystery of listening, has not been sufficiently attended to; on the contrary, instead of being praised and admired, it is the subject of universal obloquy. I might myself have been carried away by the same prejudices against it as affect the multitude, had I not considered that every great improvement has had to struggle against ignorance and error; and even in this enlightened age I would hardly venture to stem the torrent of popular opinion that is directed against it, did I not see that truth is always ultimately triumphant; that the martyr of to-day will be the saint of to-morrow. Galileo was thrown into prison for venturing to assert the motion of the earth: and friar Bacon was strongly suspected of dealing with the devil. Not to multiply instances, the first inventor of a speaking automaton was persecuted as a sorcerer: hence I infer, that if a signal improvement in the art of speaking met with such an ungrateful reception, it is not to be wondered at, that the first refiner of the art of hearing should have equal

obstacles to obstruct his progress. But great is truth, and it will prevail. Although at present the listener is hated, shunned, and kicked out of company, the time, I trust, is not far distant, when undeserved reproach will be overpaid with well-earned admiration, and the author of the art will receive the reward of his present labours and risques. Then perhaps I will appear immortalized in brass, an everlasting monument of the progress of public opinion, standing on tip-toe, the right hand open, and drawn close to the cheek, to break the current of air that might otherwise disturb the sensibility of the auditory nerve; the left reverted to repress intruders; the neck stretched forward, the eye fixed, the mouth half open, the head inclined a little to one side; one ear turned downwards to receive the lowly creeping whisper, the other raised to catch the flying tale; and beneath, in letters of gold,

*Ille ego qui primum—*

Besides the advantages accruing to the public from the art of listening, those resulting to the possessor of such an invaluable secret are not few. It gives him an insight into human nature, exhibiting it in a view before unthought on. Men, as they are generally studied, are like objects seen through a fog, which never appear in their true form or colours. The listener penetrates the veil, he gets behind the scenes, and sees them undressed, unpainted, and unadorned. It must be confessed, that many of these advantages are owing to the secrecy with which this faculty is employed: a listener, when known, ceases to be a listener; yet such is the wise regulation of Providence to reduce mankind to a level, by balancing good qualities with defects, that what is gained on one side, is lost on the other. It appears so particularly in the present instance. Could a listener keep his own secrets, he would rise to an undisputed superiority over the rest of his fellow-creatures; hearing all, and saying nothing, he would be the privy-counsellor to all mankind, and regulate the world at his pleasure. To prevent this, and keep the balance even, it is remarkable, that whenever nature has braced the ear so highly